

Public Hearing Testimony
Higher Education and Employment Committee
Marie Brault – UCONN Graduate Assistant and Member UAW GEU Local 6950
SB 864 AA Requiring the Study of the Use of Medicaid to Cover the Cost of Health Insurance
for College Students

To: Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Willis and Members of the Higher Education Committee

I am writing to oppose SB864. I am deeply concerned about the premise upon which this bill rests – the prevention or prohibition of students at Connecticut’s institutions of higher education from opting out of the institution’s healthcare plan to access state funded Medicaid benefits.

I am currently enrolled in UCONN’s healthcare plan and as you will see by my story this healthcare has been grossly inadequate and has negatively impacted my ability to manage my complex medical condition.

This bill seeks to study the issue of limiting my healthcare choices as a UCONN student worker. Until UCONN can provide me and all of the workers in UAW GEU Local 6950 better healthcare, the state should not be spending time or resources looking at ways to limit our access to quality healthcare.

I am a 5th year graduate student in the department of anthropology at UConn. I am on the graduate assistant health insurance plan that requires students to use the student health center as their first point of healthcare. Although, I am only 27 years old, I have a fairly complex medical history. I was diagnosed with acute lymphocytic leukemia at the age of 13 and completed treatment for it just after my 16th birthday. As a result of my chemotherapy, I develop avascular necrosis (AVN) in my right hip. The AVN was so severe that I received a bone graft in 2002. This bone graft failed in 2009, requiring that I receive a full hip replacement. I have remained relatively pain free and with minimal health problems since then.

In December of last year (2014), I started having right knee pain. This pain has continued for several weeks, so I went to the UConn student health services on the Storrs campus. I was told that, due to the complexity of my medical history, that student health services could not do anything (including x-rays or other imaging). I would have to be referred out of student health services to an orthopedist. The physician at student health services asked me questions, but did not allow me to provide a full answer before interrupting me. Thus, student health services was unable to provide any useful care.

By not having access to regular primary care providers and being forced to use the student health services as my primary provider, I am unable to even obtain basic imaging or primary care services and will instead have to immediately pay for additional specialist care. By not being allowed to opt out of the available health insurance in favor of other options, I will be further saddled with inadequate and/or more expensive coverage.